



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

## *Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs*

Deval L. Patrick  
GOVERNOR

Timothy P. Murray  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Ian A. Bowles  
SECRETARY

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Tel: (617) 626-1000

Fax: (617) 626-1181

<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

Contact: Lisa Capone  
(617) 626-1119  
Kristen Tikonoff  
(617) 626-1809

### Chicks Fledge from First Recorded Piping Plover Nests at DCR's Winthrop Shore Reservation

*Rare shorebirds also nest for second straight year at DCR's Revere Beach*

BOSTON – Signaling continued renewal of the Commonwealth's urban beaches, piping plovers – a threatened species usually associated with seashores off the beaten path - nested successfully this year at the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Winthrop Shore Reservation, and returned for a second year to raise young at DCR's Revere Beach. The two pairs at Winthrop Shore represent the state's first recorded piping plover nests at that location.

"We were thrilled last year when a pair of piping plovers chose Revere Beach to raise their brood," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles. "This year, we are doubly excited that these rare and engaging shorebirds not only returned to Revere, but also nested at Winthrop Shore. For two years in a row, one of America's most popular urban beaches has played host to a species ranked as threatened on both the Massachusetts and the federal Endangered Species Lists – this is positive news for renewal of our historic coasts."

Bowles thanked the DCR employees, and Mass Audubon and New England Aquarium staff who have been keeping watch over the nests – two at Winthrop Shore and one at Revere Beach - for the past several weeks.

In Winthrop, three chicks recently fledged from one nest, and three more chicks are expected to fledge from a second nest soon. The Revere Beach nest also produced three chicks, which have not yet fledged. Symbolic (twine) fencing helped to protect the nests from foot traffic before eggs hatched and provides an area of refuge for chicks until they are flying well.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program – in concert with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and conservation organizations such as Mass Audubon – have worked cooperatively to restore the state's once dwindling piping plover population. Thanks to a coordinated statewide conservation effort, population monitoring programs, and protection of vital coastal nesting sites, the Massachusetts

pipin plover population grew from 139 breeding pairs 20 years ago to 557 pairs in 2007. A final tally of 2008 nesting pairs in Massachusetts will be available this fall. Along the entire Atlantic Coast, the species went from 722 breeding pairs in 1985 to 1,887 last year, according to a preliminary count by the USFWS.

“This year’s arrival of piping plovers and least terns on Winthrop Beach speaks volumes about the success of both recovery efforts for these rare beach nesting birds throughout the state, and the improvement of the coastal urban environment in recent years,” said Rebecca Harris, director of Mass Audubon’s Coastal Waterbird Program. “The two pairs of piping plovers are on their way to successfully fledging a total of six chicks – that’s three fledglings per pair – well over the state average of around 1.2 chicks over the past few years. The nesting success of these birds comes from the fact that we found the nests early in the season and have protected them from disturbance with symbolic fencing and signage. Most crucial to their success has been the diligence of the volunteers – especially those from the New England Aquarium – who have put countless hours into fixing the fencing, monitoring, and educating the public about the birds and how vulnerable they are to disturbance from people and unleashed dogs.”

DCR Commissioner Rick Sullivan noted that DCR has taken steps to protect piping plovers and other endangered birds at a number of coastal properties this year, working with Mass Audubon’s Coastal Waterbird Program, which protects and monitors approximately half of the state’s piping plover population. DCR protects numerous other species at several inland properties as well.

“We are absolutely delighted that the plovers have returned to our beaches,” Sullivan said. “The residents and beach users of Revere and Winthrop deserve enormous thanks for the care and caution they have exercised around the nests. The presence and protection of these threatened birds on our shores is evidence of the renewal of our urban beaches, and the public’s interest in bringing nature back.”

"Success has everything to do with the beachgoers in Winthrop and Revere," said Susannah Corona, Assistant Curator in the Fishes Department of The New England Aquarium. "We put up stakes, twine, and a few signs. But the beach users have taken it upon themselves to give the birds the space they need and to self-police the few individuals that might have caused problems. Once they start getting to know the birds, people can't help liking them, even though they do cause a great deal of inconvenience at times. In return, we hope the birds will bring attention to urban beaches as valuable components in wildlife management strategy."

Massachusetts supports nearly 15 percent of the world’s population of piping plovers – small, sand-colored shorebirds that nest on sandy coastal beaches and dunes from Newfoundland to North Carolina. Other nest sites in Massachusetts include Chatham’s South Beach and South Monomoy Island, Sampson’s Island and Sandy Neck in Barnstable, Crane Beach in Ipswich, Duxbury Beach, Eastham’s Coast Guard Beach, and Race Point in Provincetown.

"Massachusetts has the largest breeding population of piping plovers on the Atlantic coast," said Mary Griffin, Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game. "The restoration effort in Massachusetts is coordinated by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and our success is largely due to the vigilant efforts of volunteers and collaboration of federal, state, county, municipal, and private partners."

“I’m very pleased to see the plovers return,” said State Representative Robert A. DeLeo. “It’s a clear indication that we are on the right track when it comes to restoring the environmental integrity and historic beauty of Winthrop and Revere beaches.”

Added Senator Anthony Petrucci, "I am very pleased to see the piping plovers have returned to Revere Beach and have also begun to branch out to neighboring Winthrop Shore Reservation. I believe this is a true testament to the Commonwealth's efforts to maintain the habitat of the piping plover and the natural beauty of our local beaches.”

Rep. Kathi Reinstein stated, "It's exciting to see the piping plover make a return visit to Revere Beach. It is a true testament to the deep commitment from the Governor, EOEA and the DCR to revitalize urban beaches throughout the Commonwealth."

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